



Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission
FY 2015 Local Arts Program Grant Guidelines

Deadline for submission April 25, 2014

**Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission McDade Administration Building
640 South Broad Street PO Box 8068 Trenton, NJ 08650**

609-278-2712 Voice 609-278-6672 Fax 609-989-6865 TTY

www.mercercounty.org

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes and the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders have made funds available for support of the Arts through a State/County Block Grant Partnership for Arts Organizations and County Arts Agencies. The three-year block grant is an essential part of the State arts community and a most effective vehicle through which to promote the programs of local arts groups. Applications are carefully evaluated to insure programs of high quality, ethnic diversity and community participation with maximum availability and accessibility to all county residents. This Local Arts Program Grant is administered by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission. The MCC&HC LAP Grant Program is intended to promote the growth and expand the public impact of community arts organizations and community arts projects.

County of Mercer

The Honorable Brian M. Hughes, *County Executive*
Board of Chosen Freeholders

Office of Economic Development and Sustainability

Elizabeth Maher Muoio, *Director*

Division of Culture and Heritage

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Eligible Applicants

Any Mercer County-based organization incorporated in the State of New Jersey as a non-profit corporation or any unit of government. The organization must have been in existence and actively providing public arts projects, programs or services within Mercer County continuously for at least the past two years. K-12 schools and school districts are not eligible, but may be a partner or collaborator on a project with an eligible applicant.

At the time of application the organization must be either incorporated and tax-exempt by determination of the Internal Revenue Service in accordance with Sections 501(c)3 or (c)4 or IRS or filings are in process and status must be achieved by January 1, 2013.

Funding Categories

General Operating Support

Applicants to this category would be limited to non-profit organizations whose missions are exclusively devoted to the public presentation of the arts. GOS funds provide support for the overall operations of these organizations for the calendar year. Although there are specific uses for GOS funds that are considered ineligible, GOS funds may be used for most activities that support the organization's arts mission.

Special Project Support

This category would be open to any organization that meets the eligibility requirements (see Eligible Applicants).

A special project is a public arts activity or event that occurs once during the year with a specific date or specific start and completion dates. The project may contain multiple events or activities, but these must be clearly related by discipline or theme. The special project MUST be separate from the regular programs of the applicant organization and should have its own mission and goals. It may be considered permanent within the sponsoring institution or it may be a one-time occurrence. The project should be wholly

dedicated to the arts and the sponsoring organization should clearly demonstrate a commitment to support of the arts project through the allocation of resources and funds raised in the community.

Examples of a special project include a concert, an exhibition, a reading, the run of a single theatrical production, a festival, or workshops, lectures and demonstrations in one of the arts disciplines.

Funded events must take place within Mercer County and have a public audience.

Technical Assistance Support

Applicants to this category would be limited to non-profit organizations whose missions are exclusively devoted to the public presentation of the arts.

Technical Assistance would be defined as practical advice offered to a nonprofit arts organization by an expert source that addresses specific areas for improvement, such as operational or management assistance, development and fundraising assistance, budgeting and financial planning, strategic and program planning, legal advice, marketing, and staff development and training.

Technical Assistance would be administered through advice, recommendations, demonstrations, and materials provided by professional staff with background in providing technical guidance. TA may be provided in person, by electronic media such as telephone, video, or e-mail, and by other means.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- capital improvements and acquisitions (including artwork)
- hospitality costs
- foreign travel
- deficits or replacement of funds normally budgeted for the activity
- fundraising events
- student-produced publications, scholarships or awards
- support for "The Nutcracker" OR any organization whose sole activity/season is based on "The Nutcracker"

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Arts Disciplines

Arts programs and projects should fall under any of the following disciplines:

- dance
- instrumental or vocal music
- theatre or musical theatre
- visual and media arts
- folk arts and crafts if they reflect authentic traditions practiced by master artists
- literary arts
- composition
- multi-disciplinary
- multi-media projects

Funding Request Cap

For General Operating Support the maximum amount of grant funds an organization may request is 25% of the average of last year and the current year total operating income, not to exceed \$6,000.

For Special Project and Technical Assistance support, the maximum allowable request would be 50% of the total estimated expense budget for that specific activity, which would be separate from the estimated expense budget for the applicant organization. Total amount requested may not exceed \$6,000

Applicants are encouraged to request the maximum amount of grant funds that they can demonstrate they can match. Grant awards are based on the number of applications received by MCC&HC and funds available for the LAP grant program.

Grant Period

The Grant Period for all FY15 grants under this program runs January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015.

Match Requirements

The match requirements are 50% of requested grant amount with at least 25% in cash; the remainder may be in-kind goods and services. New Jersey Cultural Trust and other MCC&HC grant funds may not be used to meet the match requirements. The match for GOS may be derived from the total income budget for the organization; the match for SP and TA may derive

from all contributed, earned or organization funds specifically allocated for the project or program.

Budget Documentation

Organizations applying for the first time to the county for grant funds must provide documentation of the organization's expenses in the form of

- an audit from an accountant
- copy of previous year's tax return to the IRS
- letter from an accountant certifying the expenses for the previous year.

Organizations which received a grant in the previous year that are applying again do not need to supply these documents unless there are any major changes.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Applications for GOS, SP and TA funds must complete a Project Checklist for Accessibility ADA. Organizations applying for GOS and TA funds may submit an ADA Plan in lieu of the ADA checklist. The ADA plan should be based on the comprehensive self-assessment survey tool developed by the New Jersey Arts Access Task Force. This survey is available on the NJSCA website at www.njartscouncil.org. Organizations will be required to submit an updated board-approved ADA plan with each grant application submitted.

Evaluation Process

Grant applications are evaluated by two separate groups of independent arts and cultural activists. The first evaluation is done by a Grant Review Panel comprised of members of the arts community representing a variety of disciplines. The nine-member Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission does the second evaluation.

Evaluation Criteria

Review panels evaluate applications for:

- Administrative abilities and financial stability of the organization
- Reasonable budget, use of funds and ability to raise funds for a special project

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- Planning and development, including long range planning strategies
- Cultural diversity of organization and audience
- Need, promise and potential of the organization or special project, and the capability of the organization to follow through
- Support materials that demonstrate ability to achieve artistic excellence, fulfill stated mission and/or meet the unique needs of the community
- Demonstration of ADA compliance or clear and concise plan to address non-compliance issues

Priorities for Funding

In addition to the evaluation criteria, importance is placed on:

- Innovation in programming or projects
- Collaborations or partnerships, especially between culturally diverse organizations and artists
- Demonstration of benefits to culturally diverse or underserved populations
- Inclusion of and service to artists who are disabled
- Presentation of authentic arts of ethnic cultures by artists that represent those cultures

Narrative

The narrative is an opportunity to give more details about the applicant organization, background, programs, services, goals, plans, benefits to the community. This is the vehicle to explain and describe any unusual or unique circumstances not addressed in the application form. The narrative and support materials should contain all relevant information necessary for a person unfamiliar with your organization, program or project to fully understand who it serves, its artistic vision or standards set for it, how artistic decisions are made, the qualifications of persons responsible for making those decisions, examples of recent work and accomplishments, and how the organization is managed and operates.

The narrative should:

- Begin with the mission statement and a brief history of the organization; the arts component of a non-arts-based organization; or the activities and goals relevant to the special project.

- Describe the Project or Programs to be funded. Explain how the project is to be carried out, specify the art forms involved, and include a schedule or calendar of activities. Include a brief explanation of how the project will improve the organization's artistic excellence and outreach. Explain how the successes and/or failures of the project will be evaluated.
- Explain the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy of the applicant organization. Describe progress the organization has made in making programming more accessible and inclusive. Discuss any barriers that still exist and outline goals and specific steps to address and remove barriers in a detailed timeline, with assignment of responsibility and consideration of costs necessary to implement each goal. Include attention to facilities, programmatic access, marketing, employment, and sensitivity awareness, and identification of the access committee, ADA coordinator, and a grievance procedure.
- List and explain partnerships or collaborations with other cultural, ethnic or historical groups.
- Discuss detailed publicity plan for grant-funded activity or project and your efforts to target audiences. Identify your audience (the persons who will be served) and its potential size. Be as concise as possible and include methods employed such as cable or network community shows, newspapers, mailings etc.

Support Materials

GOS and SP support materials should demonstrate the quality and illustrate the kinds of arts programming of the applicant organization or the project to be funded. Support materials for TA funding should include a detailed description of the services and the agency providing those services. It is only necessary to send one set of support materials, which will be made available to the review panel members at their request. Types of support materials might include a resume of artist, brochure, flyer, poster, program booklet, CD, videotape or DVD, photographs, published book, catalog or article.

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Long Range Planning

Long range organizational or program planning is essential to the continued success of any organization. All GOS and SP applicants must submit a long-range plan for the operation or the program. The plan should include statement of goals and strategic steps to realize those goals, assign responsibility for implementation of tasks, consider the resources needed to realize goals, and be placed on a realistic implementation timeline. The plan should cover all essential areas of the organization such as artistic vision, governance, human resources, audiences and all forms of public participation including artists and volunteers, fundraising, marketing and outreach, advocacy, educational activities, etc.

In the absence of a formal long-range plan, or if organization is in between plans, the narrative should include information detailing the process for developing the long range plan, include a timeline for that process and its current status. The strength of an applicant's long range planning will be considered in the evaluation process.

County and State Funding

Organizations may not apply to or receive grants from both the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts within the same funding cycle. The NJSCA and MCC&HC funding cycles overlap by six months (NJSCA grant cycle runs from July 1 to June 30; MCC&HC grant cycle covers January 1 through December 31). In advance of submitting a Notice of Intent to Apply with the NJSCA applicants should discuss their situation with NJSCA staff to determine eligibility.

MCC&HC will not accept applications or award grant funds to organizations applying to or receiving grants from other county arts councils or county cultural and heritage commissions.

Required Documentation

Applications must include one copy of the organization's Articles of Incorporation bearing the Date of Filing and IRS Notification of Tax Exempt Status; or proof that these two filings are in the

process at the time of submission of the grant application. Units of government must include a copy of an authorized resolution from the governing body. Chapters of national organizations must include documents from the national headquarters showing the location and current officers of the local chapter, and a copy of the national organization's IRS letter of determination.

On-site Evaluation

Organization in receipt of grant funds must furnish two tickets for at least one production and send publicity announcements for all events occurring within the grant period to the MCC&HC. As part of the administration of the LAP grant program MCC&HC is responsible for ensuring that grant-funded programs and projects are being produced and demonstrate high artistic quality and are in compliance with ADA legislation.

MCC&HC Newsletter and Online Calendar of Events

MCC&HC quarterly newsletter is distributed throughout the region, primarily to Mercer County residents and organizations. Every effort is made to collect information from the community to include in the Calendar of Events. It is a useful tool to publicize events and activities with no cost to the organization. This quarterly Calendar of Events is also available online at the MCC&HC webpage.

Feature articles in the newsletter highlight county-based organizations and programming for each season. Any organization producing a major event or activity or providing a service to the community that would be culturally, historically, ethnically or heritage-based may submit information to the newsletter editor for publication. The deadlines for submission are the first Friday two months preceding the quarter covered:

Spring	March / April / May
Summer	June / July / August
Fall	September / October / November
Winter	December / January / February

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Application Deadlines

The deadline to apply for an MCC&HC LAP Grant in GOS, SP or TA category is **April 25, 2014**. This deadline may be met by delivery of materials (1 original application signed in blue ink and 10 copies) to the MCC&HC office by the close of business (5:00 p.m.) April 25, 2014; or by mail with a postmark by midnight (12:00 a.m.) of material to the following address:

Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission
McDade Administrative Building
640 South Broad Street, Fourth Floor
PO Box 8068
Trenton, NJ 08650

Extended deadlines will be permitted only in extreme circumstances. **Organizations that are unable to comply with the deadline requirements should contact MCC&HC by phone at 609-278-2712 at least two weeks prior to the deadline to request an extension.** Please be prepared to discuss the reason that the extension is necessary and provide a firm date that you expect to have a completed application. Late applications that do not have an approved extended deadline may be disqualified.

Applicants who experience significant changes in staffing after the application deadline, Applicants who experience significant changes in programming or finances should also notify MCC&HC in writing as well as discuss these changes with the MCC&HC chief.

LAP Grant Application Assistance

The following assistance is available to applicants:

- Grant Writing workshops
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Workshops
- Individual appointments with staff (following workshops or schedule an appointment)
- Applicants may make an appointment to discuss any questions or concerns that might arise during the course of completing the application; as well as at any other time during the grant cycle.

- Staff members are available to answer questions by phone (609) 278-2712, fax (609) 278-6672 and e-mail (see Staff Directory, page 1)

Mercer County Legislative & Congressional Districts

Town	NJ Legislative District
East Windsor Township	14
Ewing Township.....	15
Hamilton Township	14
Hightstown Borough	14
Hopewell Borough	15
Hopewell Township.....	15
Lawrence Township	15
Pennington Borough	15
Princeton	16
Robbinsville Township	14
Trenton City	15
West Windsor Township	15

Town	U.S. Congressional District
East Windsor Township	4
Ewing Township.....	12
Hamilton Township	4
Hightstown Borough	4,12
Hopewell Borough	12
Hopewell Township.....	12
Lawrence Township	12
Pennington Borough	12
Princeton	12
Trenton City	4,12
Washington Township	4
West Windsor Township	12

School District/Region	U.S. Congressional District
East Windsor Regional	4
Ewing Township.....	12
Hamilton Township	4
Hightstown	4
Hopewell Borough	12
Hopewell Valley Regional	12
Lawrence Township	12
Pennington.....	12
Princeton Regional	12
Trenton City	4,12
Washington Township	4
West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional	12